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Snaring a Nazi 'Butcher'

Several dozen Bolivian guards hustled the hooded man out of a La Paz prison and into a black car, which sped away. Two hours later, authorities hurried a second hooded figure from the jail, and again a waiting car whisked him off to the airport. The second prisoner was not a decoy. He was Klaus Barbie, the infamous Nazi war criminal known as "the butcher of Lyons." A chartered plane flew Barbie to French Guiana. There he was turned over to French authorities, who bundled him into a military transport plane for a flight to Lyons—and a trial for "crimes against humanity."

Barbie's dramatic expulsion ended nearly 40 years of French frustration in trying to bring him to justice. French military courts twice sentenced Barbie to death in absentia. Then in 1971 French Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld tracked Barbie down in Bolivia, where, under the alias Klaus Altmann, he served as a police adviser to a string of oppressive military regimes. The Bolivian juntas repeatedly denied French extradition requests. But after a new civilian government, led by Hernán Siles Zuazo, took power last October, police suddenly arrested Barbie on a La Paz street in late January. The government then expelled him—on a charge of acquiring Bolivian citizenship under a false identity.

Barbie's atrocities are hardly in

doubt. He was the SS Hauptsturmführer in Lyons, the center of the French Resistance movement, and his commando units are believed responsible for the murder of 4,000 Resistance fighters. They also sent 7,500 people to concentration camps and executed hundreds more by firing squad. Eyewitnesses said they saw Barbie himself savagely beat Jean Moulin, the leader of the Resistance, before sending him off on a death train to Germany. Others reported that Barbie beheaded victims with an ax. Raymond Aubrac, a former Resistance fighter who said Barbie tortured him repeatedly for seven days, recalled last week: "Not only did he torture and kill, but he enjoyed it."

No Execution: After the war, Barbie spent 200 days in a U.S. Army prison, but U.S. intelligence officials allegedly protected him from prosecution, in return for information on former Nazis who took refuge in communist East Germany; after that, the Americans let him slip away. This time Barbie, 69, frail and baldish, will remain in jail while French officials—aided by the West Germans, who have also tried repeatedly to extradite him—build their case. Ironically, however, there is no chance that the butcher will be executed: the French Socialist government outlawed the death penalty in 1981. "I am sorry that the government did that," said an 82-year-old Frenchwoman who was tortured by an SS officer. "But even death would be too mild a punishment."

BOB LEVIN with RON MOREAU in Paris and
PETER McFARREN in La Paz

Barbie: In the SS, as a La Paz smuggler

